

# Beachie Creek Fire

OR-WIF-200299  
08/17/2020-08/23/2020

## Executive Summary



**Jonah Gladney**  
**Southern Cascades Interagency IMT**  
**INCIDENT COMMANDER**

*Incident Objectives*

Ensure firefighter and public safety by using strategies and tactics that mitigate known and anticipated hazards while providing for the highest probability of success

Be cognizant of COVID-19 procedures

Provide accurate and timely fire information through interagency and public coordination

Protect cultural and natural resources in the fire area

**OPENING STATEMENT**

The Type 3 Southern Cascades Interagency Incident Management Team was assembled and dispatched to the Detroit RD on the Willamette NF August 17<sup>th</sup>. The assignment was to manage the Beachie Creek Fire near the community that resides in the Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center. The Center borders the Opal Creek Wilderness and is home to personnel who manage events and retreats. Considering COVID-19 and subsequent mitigations, the SCIIMT received an in brief from outgoing IC and FMO Brandon Coville virtually the night of the 17<sup>th</sup>; and the team officially took command of the fire that night, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 19:00. The fire is unconfirmed but believed to be a hold-over lightning strike from July 28<sup>th</sup>. A Delegation of Authority was granted from David Warnack, Forest Supervisor Willamette NF, to Jonah Gladney ZAFMO Detroit RD, Willamette NF. Leader's Intent and direction is within the Delegation, to include but not limited to; keeping the fire within the established control lines and maintain the current footprint, while providing for firefighter and public safety as the highest priority. Additionally, ensuring COVID 19 protocols are followed using recommended CDC regulations.

The Beachie Creek Fire is on FS land, although ODF representatives are informed and involved in the decisions pertaining to the Center as the inholding is under their fire management. The Beachie Creek Fire has held its footprint burning 10-15 acres. Use of T1 and T2 Helicopters each day on the inaccessible fire has proven effective holding the fire to nearly the same acreage as when we assumed command. Our initial thought was to gain access to the fire to determine our strategy and tactics moving forward. After two days of ground-truthing with an Interagency Hotshot Crew and one day of attempting to insert Rappelers from above, it was determined a direct attack from all angles would not be the right approach. Since the day of transition, our objectives have not changed, and we have been effective in keeping the fire to the same footprint.

Since our time, nationally we have been in a PL 5 and regionally a PL 3 making resources scarce and unavailable. We remain in contact with NWCC, GACC and adjacent districts letting them know our current state and establishing lend/lease agreements of resources when the need arises.

Public Information is critical in passing the right message considering the closure orders to include one of the most

recreated river corridors on the forest, two campgrounds and multiple trails giving access and entry to Bull of the Woods and Opal Creek Wilderness. I feel PIO trap lines and news releases are reaching the right audience, although as time goes on, and recreators become ants, more public information will need to happen. The cities of Portland and Salem visit the area of the fire regularly as history would show.

The Type 3 Southern Cascades Interagency Incident Management Team transferred command of the Beachie Creek Incident to a National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) led by Incident Commander Michael Quesinberry on Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 at 1900.



## COMMAND

### Safety

Key high-risk hazards encountered:

- Driving and off-road operations.
- Steep slopes, and the potential for rolling material.
- Fatigue and over exertion due to the extended hike required to access or view the fire.
- Hazard trees

The Team has placed orders for fireline safety personnel, but those have not been filled. There was no Medical Unit Leader assigned to the incident and those duties were fulfilled by the Safety Officer. An EMTP and an ALS ambulance orders were filled and those resources were assigned to work directly for the Division Supervisor.

COVID-19 mitigation measures were put in place, some of those were:

- screen resources upon check-in and daily while on assignment using the MPHAT screening tool
- provide hand washing facilities and hand sanitizer
- close ICP to non-critical personnel
- provide specific routes at the ICP for fire personnel in the District Office to reduce contact with District employees
- spike resources near the worksite as much as possible

Hazardous or unsafe conditions were analyzed through the Deliberate Risk Assessment process, and safer work practices or mitigations were identified. Hazardous or unsafe situations and associated remedies were communicated via a focused safety message in each IAP and emphasized at daily radio briefings.

The Deliberate Risk Assessment was reviewed daily. The SOFR completed the review with the OPS3.

- Personnel assigned to Beachie Creek peaked at 57 persons on August 20<sup>th</sup>
- Through August 21, 2020 approximately 3,492 person hours, or 146 person days were expended
- Through August 21, 2020 approximately 17 pieces of rolling stock were used
- To date there have been no reportable accidents or injuries on the incident



## Medical

There was no Medical unit Leader assigned to the incident. Safety ordered a Line Medic (EMT-P) and an ALS 4x4 ambulance. The Line Medic position was filled by Dan Chandler O-10 on 8/19 and the ALS Ambulance was filled by HWM Ambulanced Service E-7. Both resources were assigned to Division

### *Information*

- Forest PAO- [tammy.t.robinson@usda.gov](mailto:tammy.t.robinson@usda.gov)
- Forest Website coordinator- [chiara\\_cipriano@firenet.gov](mailto:chiara_cipriano@firenet.gov)
- Media List on Teams current to 8-22-20
- NIMO press release will be sent out before 5:00 8/22/20. It will then uploaded to InciWeb.
- Copies of press release are on Teams Information site.
- Three interviews conducted Tuesday 8/16/20: KLCC, Zach Urness, and The Canyon Weekly from Mill City.
- Signboards have been placed at the following locations:
  - at the front of the Detroit RD office
  - French Creek Rd/Highway 22 junction
  - 4697/4696 junction (access to Elk Lake) and at Mountain High Grocery in Detroit.
  - ODF office at Mehama
  - Junction of N. Fork Road and Pioneer Rd.
- Information was posted to social media each day

## GENERAL STAFF

### Operations

The incident was first reported on Sunday August 16<sup>th</sup> with an initial response comprised solely of aerial resources due to the remote location of the fire. The initial size up was done by an air tactical group supervisor of approximately five acres with the potential to grow to 50-100 acres by that evening. That afternoon smokejumpers were ordered but were unable to find a safe jump spot, and four type 1 helicopters were utilized to slow the fires spread. By early evening the fire was reported to be 10 acres and appeared to be hung up on a rocky ridgeline.

Over the next several days additional resources arrived and attempted to gain access to the incident and determine a feasible suppression strategy. A type 1 hand crew scouted the fire and ultimately concluded that direct tactics would be neither safe nor effective due to steep slopes and heavy fuel loading, and construction of helispots near the fire was deemed not feasible. During this time aviation operations continued with bucket work from helicopters and the fire remained at approximately 10 acres due to the continual air support and weather conditions that were not supportive of large fire growth.

The current strategy involves the utilization of a PACE model with identified natural and constructed containment lines to check fire spread. Crews have identified two lookout points from which to monitor the fire and aviation use for reconnaissance and tactical missions continues to be critical.

Operational resources currently assigned to the fire in addition to the IMT3 include:

- One division supervisor trainee
- One task force leader trainee
- Two type 2IA crews
- One type 2 helicopter
- One road grader and backhoe

### ***PACE MODEL***

- We looked at natural and constructed features as containment lines and settled on the three main options.
- Primary: There is a high possibility that the fire does not leave its current footprint, at least looking at the 7 day forecast. It appears to be hung up on a rocky scree at the top of the incident and has not spilled over to the other side yet. If helicopter support is available to slow perimeter growth we may be able to keep it in basically where it is.
- Alternate: In addition to the rocky scree the incident is bordered to the north and west by Beachie and Opal creeks. Both of these waterbodies are flowing adequate water and are wide enough to serve as containment lines under moderate conditions. If fire behavior were to include single and group tree torching and spotting these lines could be compromised and jumped by the fire due to the steep slopes adjacent to the creeks.
- Contingency: Incorporates additional parts of the Opal Creek Wilderness to the north and south of the incident and utilizes Battle Axe creek to the north, Opal Creek to the west, and French Creek Ridge to the south and east.
- Emergency: These lines are still being determined but will most likely incorporate portions of the 2207 and other roads outside the wilderness area.

### ***LOOKOUT POINTS***

- 2207-126 (partial view, drive to)
- French Creek Ridge (Full view, hike in) This location is being looked at as a place to set up a satellite linked camera to view the fire remotely



## Air Operations

The Unit Aviation Office and Helibase Manager proved to be a safe, efficient, and financially responsible organization during the Beachie Creek Fire. Throughout the incident, aviation managers assessed risks associated with the fire to minimize aircraft and personnel exposure.

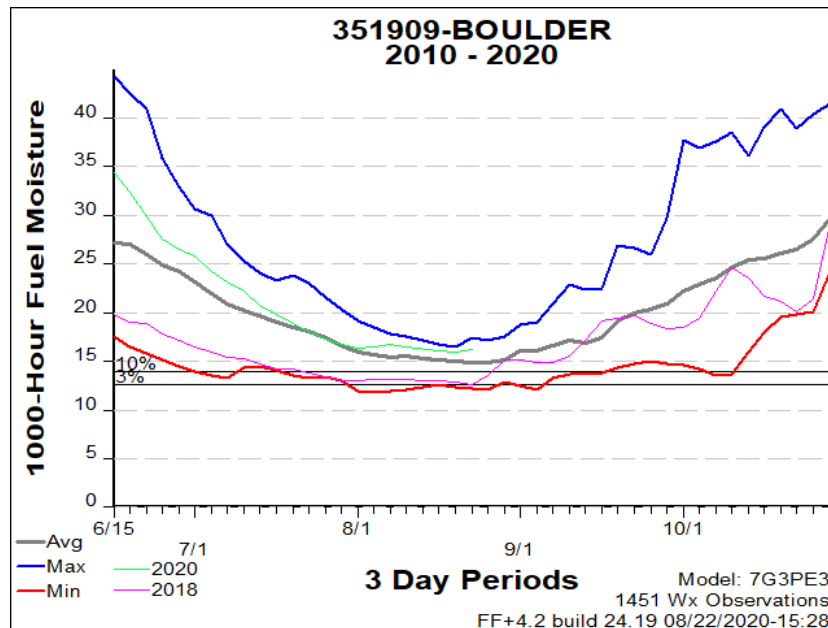
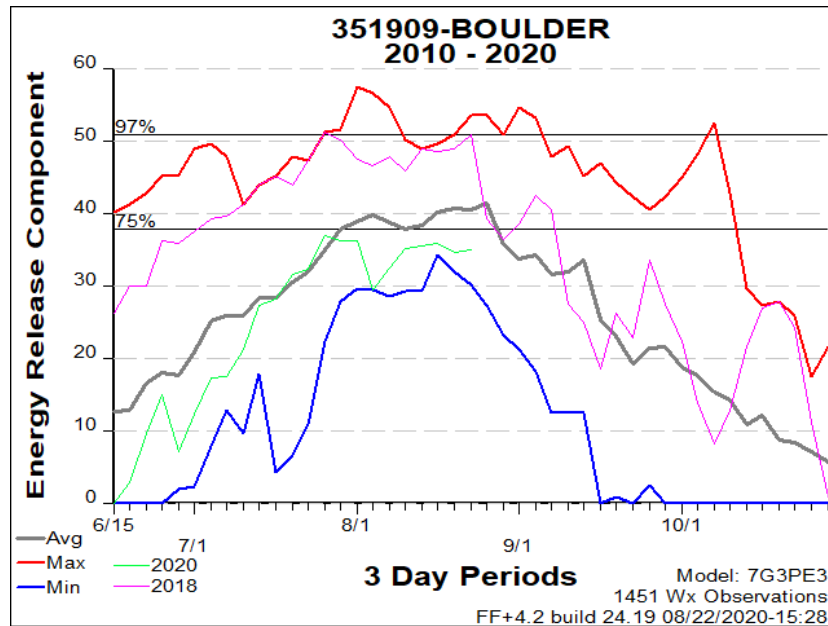
- From August 16th through August 20th, 2020, the Air Branch flew an estimated 38.1 flight hours at a cost of approximately \$188,122.24
- Incident aircraft dropped 336,095 gallons of water and 0 gallons of retardant.
- SAFECOMS – A SAFECOM was submitted for a number 2 engine failure on August 19th.
- Land Use Agreements (LUA) were in place for Davis Helibase, Davis Airstrip (6S4) near the community of Gates, OR.

<b><u>Air Operations</u></b>	
<b>Passengers transported:</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Cargo delivered (lbs):</b>	<b>2,310</b>
<b>Water delivered (gal):</b>	<b>336,095</b>
<b>Retardant delivered (gal):</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Helicopter flight hours:</b>	<b>30.3</b>
<b>Fixed wing flight hours:</b>	<b>7.8</b>
<b>UAS Operations:</b>	<b>0</b>

## Fire Behavior/Weather

### *Fuels*

The primary carrier of the fire is timber with understory (TU5) in mature unmanaged stands. The species composition is a Douglas-fir mixed conifer forest with a vine maple and rhododendron shrub component in the understory. Surface and ground fuels include heavy down and dead fuel loading and a deep layer of duff. ERCs have been around the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile during the first week of the incident, and most fuel moistures are generally average for this time of the year. 1000 fuels moisture is approximately 16% which is an important local indicator for fire spread potential and surface fuels consumption.



*Boulder Creek RAWS is located southeast of the incident and is the primary district RAWS*

### ***Fire Behavior***

During the first day of the incident the fire quickly grew to 10 acres with a quick uphill run flowed by active backing and flanking fire. Since then fire behavior has been limited to smoldering and creeping in the duff and heavy down material. At the top of the fire it appears to be held in check by a rocky opening with little to no available fuels.

### ***Weather***

The incident began during a red flag warning with critical fire weather conditions including temperatures above 90 degrees and RH values in the mid-20s. Since then the weather pattern has moderated considerably with daily high temperatures in the 70s and minimum RH values over 30%. On August 21 the fire area received trace amounts of precipitation and the 7 day forecast shows no indication of weather that result in significant fire growth or activity.



## Plans

- The planning section was staffed with two SITL(t) and a GISS (t).
- Morning operations briefings were broadcast over radio to spiked resources.
- Evening planning meetings were held via TEAMS or conference call.

## Situation

- A 209 was completed every 3 days for the incident.
- Standard map products were produced on a daily basis with hard copies distributed and georeferenced pdfs available at [www.ftp.nifc.gov](http://www.ftp.nifc.gov)
- A spot weather forecast was requested each day of the incident.
- An IR flight was requested most days of the incident, but due to higher priority requests, the incident was not flown.

## Resources

- Checked in and demobed resources with a combination of virtual and in-person check in.
- Daily IAPs were produced with digital copies emailed each night. A mailing list can be found in the doc box.
- Resource status was communicated with finance.
- A glidepath was created and included in the transition package.

## Documentation

- Folder structure was setup in Firenet and documents were filed by plans.
- GIS data was uploaded to the FTP site
- Some hard copies of documentation such as resource orders are filed in a doc box and provided to the incoming team.



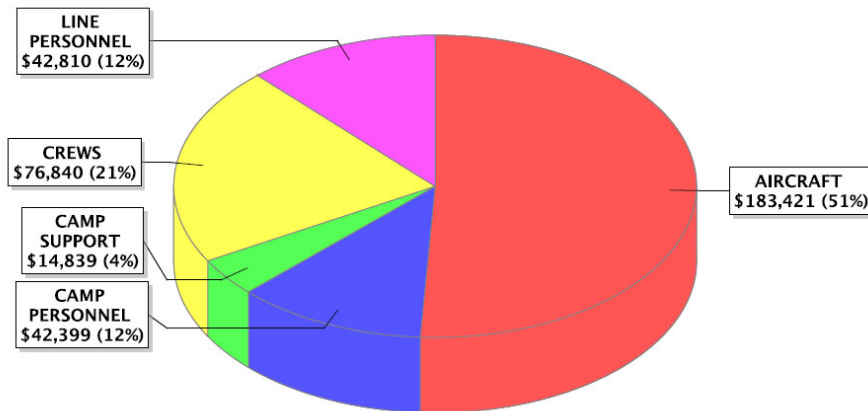
## Finance

Summary of the total cost of the Beachie Creek incident.

### Group Category Summary Report by Incident

Incident: BEACHIE CREEK (US-OR-WIF-200299)

### Group Category Summary Graph Report



**TOTAL estimated cost as of 8/21: \$360,298**

## Logistics

- USFS, Detroit Ranger District Station is being used as the ICP primarily for overhead personnel and associated District personnel.
- District Office is being used as ICP, overhead camping on the fenced compound, and the gym building for restrooms and showering.
- Land Use Agreements were used including the Davis Airport and Opal Creek Ancient Forest Center.
- Davis Airport, Gates, Oregon was used as Helibase.
- One Spike Camp, Three Pools (Three Pools Day Use Area and Shady Cove Campgrounds} is currently being used to support the line fire fighters. Anticipated capacity was for 25 to 65 people. Early in the incident Jawbone Meadow was used as a spike camp, but due to the logistical difficulties to support the site it was dropped for camp use.

## Facilities

- All the facilities utilized have supported approximately 25 to 60 personnel,
- Recycling program consists of using the District's system for recycled waste paper and returnable bottle collection is being utilized.
- Facilitated quality sleeping for personnel scheduled both on day and night shifts. Hotel accommodations were utilized for night shift road guards and helibase security, LEOs, and Helibase personnel.
- Spike camp was managed for approximately 57 people maximum. A staging area manager is being used to assist with the day to day camp management.

- Currently 18 porta toilets and 9 pump sinks are being used on the incident. These toilets and sinks are located at spike camp, road block sites, and helibase.

### ***Ordering/Supply***

- Supply Cache is located in a small building of the District's warehouse area.
- A small cache delivery was made early in the life of the incident from the Redmond Cache.
- A district employee is functioning as an RCDM and managing the small cache.
- An RCDM and ORDM has been ordered but not filled and often ending as UTF. Ordering is currently is being completed by LSC and other team members assisting.
- Overall, the need for supplies has been minimal to this point.
- Attention is being placed on district fire cache restock.

### ***Ground Support***

- Fleet manager, Caleb Gay from Corvallis, OR is available for equipment inspections. There has been little need for equipment inspections (1 water tender, 1 contract ambulance, 2 contracted UTVs).
- There is one USFS grader on the fire grading and improving roads.
- Currently there are 2 District employees hired as drivers for the incident.
- Fuel can be obtained within the local communities.
- Tires damaged on the fire include 1 tire which ended up being replaced.
- There is no mechanic assigned to the fire.
- There has been no need for drivers to transport personnel.

### ***Security***

- Road and trail closures have facilitated the need to maintain 3 road blocks (North Fork, French Creek, and Elk Lake). Road blocks are staffed daily organized by a lead security guard.
- Security personnel have been difficult to obtain. SECG security guard non-enforcement and local. District employees are being utilized to complete the job. SEC2 or 3 security specialists are unable to fill (UTF) at this time.
- 24 hour coverage is being provided for North Fork Road Block and Davis Airport Helibase. Night duty consists of 2 personnel together at each of the two sites with a radio check in every 2 hours.
- Total Security staff consists of 3 SECGs, 1 SEC2, 4 to 8 District personnel being scheduled as available.

### ***Food Unit.***

- Crews and overhead personnel were on self-subsistence for the first 3 days.
- Lunches were served for dinner on August 18, 2020. Lunches were purchased from the Subway restaurant in Gates, Oregon. Lunches have continued every day arriving about 0700 daily with ice and water at the spike camp and about 1000 for some overhead personnel.
- Dinners have been served 2 times for the Spike Camp. Dinners have been purchased from 2 different vendors with attention to menu variety.
- Plans are to continue with the lunches and dinners.

### ***Communication***

- Forest Net is being utilized by the fire. OR Eugene Interagency Center is providing dispatch support for the fire. Coverage is being provided for night security operations at the Helibase and the North Fork Road Block.

- A small amount of radio cloning is being performed at the District.
- No major communications issues have been noted.
- Connectivity for WiFi and cell phones remains a major issue at the ICP (Detroit District Office).

## **Team Successes:**

### IC

- There was great communication with agency admins, agency representatives, fire staff, and district fire overhead and the team.
- Forest timber targets were kept a priority through moving the TFR and coordinating entrance in to closure areas.

### Safety

- Multiple COVID-19 concerns were mitigated with the use of spike camps for all operational resources
- Zero accidents and zero injuries occurred during the incident.
- The relationship with the District and Forest COVID-19 coordinators was established early on and information sharing was successful.

### Logistics

- A cell phone booster greatly improved connectivity issues within the district conference room.
- Logistics and Marion County Sheriff's office built a good working relationship.
- Relations with Jaw Bones Flats owners had a positive outcome and a land use agreement was put into place.

### Operations

- Early tactical decisions were made in a timely manner.
- The availability of IHCs and aviation resources were essential.

### Plans

- Access into the incidents E-Isuites account was granted quickly.
- The quality of the map products greatly improved over the duration of incident.
- The type 3 kits were provided quickly and useful for the most part.

### Finance

- Working virtual.
- Set-up and using ALL electronic files.

### Information

- 2020 WNF Fire IMT PIO Information Packet set in place by PAO created clear communications and a team environment for expectations and products.
- Willamette Nat'l Forest had social media set up and PAO was able to describe expectations and chain of command, and hand it off.
- COVID plan in place created an atmosphere of safe cooperation.

## **Team Challenges:**

- The quality of cell service and internet at the district office made many tasks difficult.
- Team section chiefs being pulled to other incidents put pressure on the remaining team to fill holes.
- Staffing positions virtually added complexity to many aspects of the incident.
- Managing a long duration incident with a limited staff will continue to be a challenge.

### Operations

- The lack of available resources made operations difficult.

- The remote location of the fire made communications difficult.
- Rugged terrain resulted in limited suppression opportunities.

#### Plans

- Firenet was new and had a sharp learning curve.
- Computers for AD's and mapping the printers delayed timely delivery of 209's, IAP's and map products.
- Having a qualified GISS who had access to ftp, AGOL and EGS.

#### Finance

- Working virtual and doing ALL electronic files.
- Not having any Finance people on site was stressful and impactful to other resources at times.

#### Information

- Connectivity- every aspect of the information effort is depended on reliable, speedy internet connection in a community that just does not have the infrastructure.
- A variety of new communication and software systems set in place, just learning them.

